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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000365

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: CAMPUS COMMOTION: RANGOON AND MYITKYINA STUDENT PROTESTS

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

1. (C) Summary: According to Embassy sources, recent student-led protests over administrative issues at two university campuses, one located in a Rangoon suburb and the other in Kachin State in northern Burma, resulted in military intervention to restore "order." These reports indicate the regime remains determined to prohibit even minor dissent on the country's few remaining campuses. End summary.

2. (C) In mid-March, several hundred students at a government computer science institute in Hlawgar, located some 20 miles north of central Rangoon, reportedly boycotted classes to protest against a lecturer in a dispute involving attendance issues. As a result, school authorities identified 175 students (about 75 percent of the student body) as ineligible to sit for final exams for failure to attend regular classes. The ruling led to a spontaneous demonstration and the institute's rector appealed to Rangoon's Military Commander, who dispatched troops o/a March 16 to take control of the campus.

3. (C) In a separate incident, o/a March 11 several hundred students at Myitkyina University in Kachin State reportedly massed at a downtown police station to protest the arrest of two fellow students who had refused demands from a police officer for bribe money. Military units intervened to assist police in quelling the protest and arrested as many as ten students. Sources claim that the university has remained closed since March 11. Although international media sources have reported the events in Myitkyina and claims that soldiers fired warning shots, Embassy officers who visited the city on March 17 reported no unusual activity or evidence of lingering tensions.

4. (C) Comment: The SPDC closed most urban campuses in the early 1990s as a result of 1988 student political demonstrations. The few "satellite" and "distance learning" campuses that have reopened in recent years are located in remote, rural locations as a means to discourage student activism. These recent, seemingly minor, student actions appear to be innocuous administrative protests. However, reports of military intervention indicate the depth of regime paranoia regarding campuses as potential hotbeds of political activism. End comment.
Martinez